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Volunteers share the holiday spirit

Summary: In the spirit of the holidays, students, staff and faculty at the University of Minnesota, Morris are coordinating a variety of volunteer projects that will benefit local individuals and families as well as those in communities surrounding Morris.

(December 1, 2006)-Students, staff and faculty at the University of Minnesota, Morris have captured the holiday spirit by coordinating a variety of volunteer projects that will benefit local individuals and families as well as those in communities surrounding Morris.

Community Service and Volunteerism (CSV) in the Office of Student Activities will host its fifth annual Adopt-A-Family program. This campus effort is being directed by program adviser Carol McCannon, with the help of UMM student and office intern, Lydia Carlson.

The program originated at UMM when members of the Cougar football team asked the Student Activities staff to organize the program five years ago. "I like to give credit where it is due," McCannon said, as she told of a UMM student athlete who asked if the football team could sponsor a family as his high school team had done.

"The Adopt-A-Family program is part of the holiday spirit that just takes over and makes you feel really good," said McCannon. "It's one of those things about which people really get on board."

All but one family has been adopted already this year, but there is always a need for more involvement, according to McCannon. Traditionally, UMM residence halls, teams, organizations and the Student Activities Office as a whole sponsor families each year, but for those who would like to sponsor a family as individuals or team with others, there is still time to contact McCannon. The program is being coordinated in partnership with Stevens County Human Services.

In addition to the Adopt-A-Family program, UMM students, staff and faculty are joining with other efforts in the area to coordinate the annual Toys for Tots drive. This year a Tales for Tots drive, a spin on the long-standing Toys for Tots tradition, is also underway. The Tales for Tots drive is being spearheaded by the UMM chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the international English honor society.

"We wanted Sigma Tau Delta to do at least one service project a semester and found this idea on the Sigma Tau Delta national Web site," said Alyssa Herzog, UMM student and president of the UMM chapter. Members will be collecting new or just like new children's and young adult books to donate to families this Christmas.

Donations of hats, gloves, mittens and scarves are also being accepted to decorate a "mitten tree," which is located in the Student Center lobby. The tree is sponsored by CSV along with Catholic Campus Ministries.

Boxes for toys and books donations are located at the UMM Information Desk on the main level of the Student Center the Student Activities Office, located in the Student Center's lower level Willie's Super Valu Morris Area High School

the Morris Public Library and the Best Northland Prairie Inn. Those who donate items at the Prairie Inn site will receive a coupon for \$1 off a meal at the Ranch House.

A new holiday event, sponsored by the UMM Commission on Women, will be held for UMM students who are also parents. The event, set for December 5, from 6-8 p.m. in Oyate Hall of the Student Center, invites student parents and their children to enjoy holiday music, surprises for the children, food and drawings.

For more information on these volunteer programs, contact Carol McCannon at (320) 589-6080.

Photo: Student and staff volunteers – along with, Pounce, the Cougar athletic mascot – enjoy a pre-Parade of Lights moment in front of the UMM parade unit, a light-adorned campus snow plow.

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